

SUBJECT: Corpus Christi port authority commission eligibility requirements

COMMITTEE: Natural Resources — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 5 ayes — Counts, Yost, King, Puente, Walker

1 nay — Stiles

3 absent — Combs, Corte, R. Lewis

WITNESSES: For — None

Against — None

BACKGROUND: The port commission oversees the Port of Corpus Christi Authority of Nueces County, which provides channels, docks, facilities for handling cargo, and public facilities. The commissioners court of Nueces County appoints four members to the port commission, and the city council of Corpus Christi appoints three members. The commissioners serve staggered three-year terms.

DIGEST: HB 3211 would require that a port commission appointee be a resident of Nueces County for at least six months. It would also limit a commissioner to three full terms in office.

The bill would take effect immediately if approved by two-thirds of the membership of each house, but would not affect the eligibility of a person who is already serving as a member of the port commission on the effective date of the bill.

SUPPORTERS SAY: Requiring that the commissioners live in Nueces County for at least six months before appointment would ensure that they understand the implications of their decisions to the area. The port generates net revenue of between \$9 million and \$12 million dollars a year. It is the sixth largest port in the United States and the deepest ship channel on the Gulf Coast. The revenue earned by the port is spent on capital improvement to the port. Decisions regarding these major expenditures, having significant local impact, should be carefully thought out from a local perspective.

In addition, HB 3211 would limit a commissioner to three terms in office. Only 25 commissioners have served on the commission since its inception in 1926. Over the years, many commissioners have stayed on for dozens of years, garnering an inappropriate amount of power over this lucrative government entity. HB 3211 would give new commissioners the opportunity to introduce fresh ideas for implementation by the port, but it would not affect any currently serving member.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

The county commissioners and city council should be able to decide how long an experienced port commissioner may serve without an arbitrary three-term limit being imposed.